

Brief History of Provo City Cemetery

(Est. 1853)

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Forward

I have always thought a more complete cemetery history was needed and have had this compilation as a goal during my administration. The information has been collected from cemetery records, news clippings, and notes from former cemetery employees and sextons who have served the community. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Provo 4th Ward records were also a wonderful source of historical information.

This is the first edition of this history, therefore additional facts are always welcome for possible inclusion in future printings.

This booklet was compiled and edited by Cathy Jackson (Office Manager) and Annalise Eccles (Assistant), with a lot of data and input provided by Patricia "Pat" Giles (former Office Manager, 1985-1995).

A nationwide interest in family history has provided many interesting stories and facts. In Provo, we have had numerous patrons come to research genealogy and locate family burial sites. We hope your histories are more complete with the information provided herein.

Sincerely,

Milton A. DeLeeuw
Sexton

placed in the granite Veterans Memorial. "It has a lot of historical facts relating to the wars," Dixon recalls. Items from the capsule were put on display in several locations within the city before being resealed with additional items in the new memorial. The capsule is to be opened on the 100th anniversary of the World War I Armistice in the year 2018.

Babyland

One special area in the cemetery is Babyland, located directly west of the Veterans Monument. This section of the cemetery was designed for families who need only an infant space, and has several unique customs. Every Easter, Babyland is visited by the "Easter Phantom" who decorates every infant grave. The graves are again decorated anonymously on Memorial Day. These kind acts warm the hearts of families who have lost their little ones.

One memorial is a bench dedicated to "Baby Jane," an infant girl found abandoned and drowned in the Provo River. The baby was buried in March of 1992, and the bench was placed by the Provo Police Mutual Aid Association. The inscription reads, "Abandoned By Mother But Not By Us."

Other items of interest:

The cemetery covers 45 acres

As of Sept. 1997, there were 24,108 burials that have taken place,

7,000 spaces have been purchased for future use and
3,646 spaces are still available for purchase

The second monument provides the center of the **third** and present one, with granite stone slabs extending out from each corner. Names of all veterans buried in the cemetery are inscribed onto marble tiles which adhere to the stone extensions. Names and branch of service information were gathered from cemetery and mortuary records, private citizens, and BYU students who canvassed the cemetery gathering information from headstones. This monument was dedicated on Memorial Day in 1994. As veterans pass away the cemetery continues to keep this memorial complete and up to date.

Veteran crosses: Crosses with nameplates and flags were begun as a Memorial Day tribute by the Veterans Council. At first they were placed at the grave site of each known veteran buried in the cemetery. In 1969, the Veterans Council began to display all the crosses in Block 20, placed row upon row in alphabetical order. It was an awe-inspiring site to see. This tradition was discontinued in 1989 as the effort exceeded the resources of the Veterans Council.

Crosses with nameplates and flags are currently available at the cemetery office for families to purchase and display on their veteran's grave. Proceeds go towards the upkeep of the memorial.

Time Capsule

A time capsule was discovered in the second Veterans Monument when it was disassembled to be enhanced and moved to its present site. A 3' x 2' x 2' copper box was discovered and the search to find out its history was started. Wayne Beesley remembered helping to construct the capsule in 1971. In 1972 the box was put in the memorial by members of the Provo Veteran's Council led by F. Orville Singleton. Former Provo Mayor Verl Dixon remembers when it was put together and

History of Provo City Cemetery

Fort Field Cemetery

In 1849, John S. Higbee was sent to Provo by Brigham Young to find a suitable place to settle a colony on the Provo River. Two weeks after his report, thirty-one families consisting of about fifty people made the three day trip to the south side of the Provo River. On April 3rd of the same year, these settlers began a stockade known as Fort Utah, but the name was soon changed to Fort Field. Eight people died that first year. Cemetery records disclose that George and Matilda Haws, Harriet Turner, and William Dayton were four of the eight. They were buried in the **FIRST** Fort Field graveyard which was located on the Williams farm located just across the highway at Lake View (now known as Geneva Road). There is a Daughters of the Utah Pioneers Marker near these burial grounds.

Pioneer life resulted in several fatal accidents. For instance, William Dayton was killed as he and George W. Bean were giving a demonstration of the cannon. One shot had been fired, and a spark ignited the powder during reloading. Dayton was killed and Mr. Bean lost his left arm. "Hout" Conover rode 120 miles in twenty hours to Centerville for Dr. Blake. This was a feat of riding history.

Also recorded is the death of Joseph Higbee on February 9, 1850. He was "behind a log with his companion, it being so very quiet he raised his head to look about and was shot through the neck" (from *Diary of Epsy Jane Williams Pace*). He was the only living son of Isaac Higbee, a Bishop in Nauvoo and Salt Lake. This occurred during a battle with Indians where several people were wounded.

Temple Hill Cemetery

In 1850, a better location was found and a second fort was built. The houses and stockade were moved and replaced on the second spot. Later that year, it was extended by another addition or fort. A **SECOND** Fort Field Cemetery was begun. In *The History of Provo 4th Ward*, John E. Booth states, "Fort Field Cemetery name is changed to Temple Hill." By 1880, this site was discarded as a burial ground as the soil was too sandy, causing graves to cave in before burials could take place. This site is where the Maeser Building now stands on the Brigham Young University campus.

Grandview Hill Cemetery

A **THIRD** cemetery was located on Grandview Hill. In about 1860, the corner of three land grants belonging to James Smith, Joseph Thompson, and a man named Rasmussen, became the burial ground for a child of Thompson. As time went on, other burials were added and eventually not only were there graves on the Thompson land, but on the land belonging to the other two landowners. By 1879, this location had become a fair-sized cemetery (around sixty burials). The landowners objected and refused to allow other burials to take place. They also requested that the bodies of those buried there be removed at the expense of their families. Most of the bodies were removed to Temple Hill Cemetery. However, some next of kin had moved from the community, others could not afford the expense involved, while still others preferred to leave their loved ones unmolested, even though it meant they would rest in an unmarked grave. Two Rasmussen children are still buried there and their graves are marked by two lilac bushes north and west of the Baptist Church on Columbia Lane.

Sandgren, Clyde. (1910-1989) Composed the BYU Cougar fight song. (Block 10 Lot 212)

Scott, Andrew Hunter. (1815-1874) Fifth Mayor of Provo, moved from Temple Hill Cemetery. (Block 2 Lot 34)

Smoot, Abraham Owen, I. (1815-1895) His major financial contributions allowed Brigham Young Academy to continue. ASB building on BYU campus named after him. Salt Lake City Mayor. (Block 2 Lot 53)

Smoot, Reed. (1862-1941) U.S. Senator and LDS Apostle. (Block 3 Lot 75)

Stewart, Ora Pate. (1910-1990) Author/composer, honored by four different United States Presidents. (Block 1 Lot 109)

Taylor, Samuel Woolley. (1907-1997) Widely published author including "The Absent-Minded Professor", Pulitzer Prize nominee, grandson of LDS church president John Taylor. (Block 8 Lot 3)

Thayne, Mirla G. (1907-1997) Composer of songs such as "I Wonder When He Comes Again." (Block 18 Lot 14)

Turner, Harriett Marie. (1834-1849) One of first four burials, removed from Fort Field Cemetery. (Block 4 Lot 4)

Veterans Monument and Related Information

The Provo City Cemetery Veterans Monument has undergone three phases:

The **first** monument was made of wood and was located on the west end of the cemetery.

The **second** monument was made of granite and placed in the southeast area of the cemetery approximately 200 feet to the south of the site of the present monument. It was an exact replica of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

People of Interest Buried in the Provo City Cemetery

See Centerfold for burial locations

Beebe, Luana Rockwell. (1814-1897) Wife of Orin Porter Rockwell. (Block 3 Lot 25)

Carter, Hannah Knight Libby. (1786-1867) Moved from Grandview Hill in 1867. (Block 4 Lot 14)

Cloward, Jacob. (1790-1851) Second burial at Temple Hill Cemetery. (Block 3 Lot 4)

Dayton, William A. (1822-1849) Killed by cannon fire at Old Fort. Moved from Fort Field Cemetery. Location unknown.

Drake, John M. (1848-1890) Civil War Veteran. (Block 2 Lot 49)

Farnsworth, Philo T. (1906-1971) Inventor of the television and stereophonic sound. (Block 10 Lot 18)

Harmon, Dr. Carlyle. (1905-1997) 39 patents, including disposable diapers. (Block 10 Lot 52)

Haws, George (died 1849) **and Matilda.** (1826-1849) 1849 Fort Field burial relocated to Provo City Cemetery.

Jones, Captain Dan. (1810-1862) Riverboat captain, bodyguard of Joseph Smith, and first mayor of Manti. His history is on the back of his headstone. (Block 3 Lot 28)

Kimball, Edwin "Eddie". (1903-1991) During WWII, his air/sea rescue programs are credited with saving the lives of 9,000 Navy pilots. Physical fitness advisor to President Dwight D. Eisenhower. (Block 15 Lot 10)

Knight, Jesse. (1845-1921) At one time, wealthiest entrepreneur in Provo whose generosity matched his wealth. JKHB building on BYU campus named after him. (Block 4 Lot 2)

Mabey, Irvin A. (1908-1996) First Eagle Scout in Provo. (Block 4 Lot 90C)

Martin, Thomas L. (1885-1958). Appointed Dean of Applied Sciences at BYU in 1937. MARB building on BYU campus named after him. (Block 6 Lot 85)

Provo City Cemetery

The first Fort Field Cemetery was too wet, The Temple Hill Cemetery (second Fort Field) was too sandy, and the Grandview Hill Cemetery, where three farms converged had been closed at the request of the landowners. A new burial location was needed, so on June 11, 1853, a special meeting was called at the Public Square (Pioneer Park). A committee was appointed to find a better place for a cemetery. On June 25, 1853, their report was presented and the current site of the Provo City Cemetery on Springville Road (State Street) was chosen.

The Provo City Cemetery was dedicated in 1853. The process of moving the remains from surrounding burial grounds to the Provo City Cemetery took many years to complete. The records show that George Haws, Matilda Haws, Harriette Turner, and Wm. Dayton were moved from Fort Field to the Provo City Cemetery. Mary Blake Peay, Abisha Ware, and others were moved to the Provo City Cemetery from Temple Hill Cemetery. The Daughters of the Utah Pioneers memorial drinking fountain lists the names of the known pioneers who were moved here from other burial sites. The first burial listed in the Provo City Cemetery records, not moved from a previous site is Joseph Whipple in December 1856.

Inside the cemetery, a large area was designated for the remains of those people who were relocated from the Temple Hill Cemetery. It is in Block 5 Lot 62, which is located at 5th West and 1st South. Some headstones are present, but most are unmarked graves.

Pioneer Memorial Drinking Fountain

In 1964, a drinking fountain was erected by the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers which lists some of the known pioneers that were moved from other cemeteries. Their names and known locations a listed are as follows:

Matilda & George Haws (Block 4 Lot 18,17)	Joseph McEwan Mary B. Peay (Marker in Bl 5 lot 62)
Harriet M. Turner (Block 4 Lot 4)	Elizabeth Baum (Block 1 Lot 53)
William Dayton	Mrs. Jerome Benson
Joseph Higbee	Heber C. Davis
Katherine Radford	William Davis
Jesse McCarred	William K. Follett
Jacob Cloward (Block 3 Lot 4)	Elizabeth Sarah Goodman
Martha Wheeler	John Moroni Goodman
Jacob H. Barney	John Haws, Sr. Block 1 Lot 40)
Matilda Park	Willis Moss
Sarah & William McLane	O. Foster McCarroll
Sally Norton	Ann S. B. Robbins
Joseph Ivy	John Rogers Tobbins
Margarett Fausett	Daniel Stowell
Emily Roberts	Emma B. Thatcher
Louisa Follett	Edward Vincent
Abisha Ware (Block 4 Lot 80)	

Burial Plots

Cemetery records show burial property purchased in 1878 by: W.D. Startup, George Baum, and James J. Talmage. Other owners are listed, but no deeds were recorded so the dates are unknown. At that time a lot capable of 32 adult burials was selling for \$5.00, which did NOT include perpetual maintenance. With inflation, that is the equivalent of \$20,000 in 1997. In

night to bury their dead, and mandatory laws were passed requiring that masks be worn in public. Travel through Utah County was allowed, but anyone who stopped was quarantined for four days and had to be declared flu-free by a physician before being released. The LDS Church canceled all meetings.

- 1924 - 1929 Unknown
- 1929 - 1934 **Joseph F. Giles**
- 1934 - 1937 **Don W. Conover**
- 1937 - 1947 **Spencer Clark**
- 1947 - 1950 **John F. Thurgood**
- 1950 - 1960 **Daniel W. Webster**
 - Started card file system
- 1960 - 1986 **Burl S. Peterson**
 - Developed new section (Blocks 13 - 21).
 - 1969: Implemented veteran cross display in Block 20.
 - 1972: Burial records made available to Provo City Library, chronological listing and alphabetical card file.
 - Last sexton to live on the grounds, moved 1978.
 - Installed sprinkler system
- 1986 - 1988 **Burl Kent Peterson**
- 1988 - 1993 **Max S. Mitchell**
 - Initiated current Veterans Memorial.
 - Updated cemetery regulations.
 - Computer database for burials implemented.
- 1993 - Present **Milton A. DeLeeuw**
 - Developed Block 22 during summer 1993.
 - Current Veterans Memorial completed, May 1994.
 - 1994 micro-burst wind storm toppled 154 trees on May 31st right after Memorial Day. Closed for three weeks for clean-up.
 - Lighting system installed, spring 1996.
 - Burial rights information and mapping system computerized, 1997-1998.

lovely young woman, her parents insisted upon opening the casket to view her condition, but father tried to talk them out of such an emotional strain and not feeling quite sure of what they might see. He finally gave in and when the lid was removed, everyone gasped in horror to see the girl's body was turned over face down and signs of her having come alive for a brief time to struggle and finally die. It was known to be a fact that people were sometimes buried alive, a tragic thing that could not happen in our modern world of embalming."

Mrs. Vera C. Sirrine (1967)

Daughter of T. H. Cluff

Note: The tradition of Bell Ringers at a burial site was started hundreds of years ago just for this reason. One end of a cord was placed inside the coffin and the other end was above ground connected to a bell. A vigil was kept and if the bell started to ring, the person was quickly dug up.

1899 - ? **Clark Snow**

? - 1906 **Joseph Taylor**

1906 - 1917 **Evan Wride**

Wages were \$50.00 per month as Sexton. His crew earned \$1.00 per day. The western part of the cemetery was planted in hay which was harvested and probably sold for revenue. (Elwyn Wride 1974)

1917 - 1924 **Niels Johnson**

1922: Salary set at \$100.00 per month

Flu epidemic of 1918-1919 caused over 200 deaths in Utah County, 22 million deaths world wide. Whole families were nearly wiped out. Within one week, Wm. Thurgood, his wife Lena, and his father died. Lena's father, two sisters, and a brother also perished within a week. Two more Thurgoods, Emma and Arthur, also died. Mourners crept into the Provo City Cemetery at

1997 those same 32 burial rights, including perpetual maintenance, would cost \$19,200.

Other Early Cemeteries Near Provo

On the old township maps, a Christmas City graveyard is located on the south side of the entrance to Provo Canyon. It was an old mining area and is now a gravel pit.

American Fork Canyon had extensive mining at one time. In the area of Mary Ellen Flat there is a cemetery where many miners are buried.

Non-documented Sites

On the east side of State Street, three-fourths the way up Orem Hill, there were several burials.

The mouth of Slate Canyon was said to have several burials.

A place below the "Y" on the mountain and an area up Springdell in the canyon had burials.

There were burial sites just about everywhere as many people desired to be laid to rest by favorite trees, hills, mountains, etc. A particularly beautiful site might have several burials.

Sextons and Their Experiences

1894 - 1899 **Thaddeus H. Cluff**

Obstacles had to be overcome in moving the bodies from their original graves in other cemeteries to their new location in the Provo City Cemetery. Many tales were related about some of the horrors of their work. "One story remains quite clear in our minds for it was a most unusual one, a really trying experience for our father and his associates. When they were ready to remove the casket of a recent burial containing the remains of a

